

President's Speech Before Congress

Hopes Stand He Has Taken Will Meet with Approval and Support and That Germany Will See Justice of Demands.

Washington, April 19.—President Wilson in his speech to Congress today said:

Gentlemen of the Congress:

A situation has arisen in the foreign relations of the country of which it is my plain duty to inform you very frankly.

It will be recalled that in February, 1915, the Imperial German Government announced its intention to treat the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland as embraced within the seat of war and to destroy all merchant ships owned by its enemies that might be found within any part of that portion of the high seas, and that it warned all vessels, of neutral as well as of belligerent ownership, to keep out of the waters it had thus proscribed or else enter them at their peril.

The government of the United States earnestly protested. It took the position that such a policy could not be pursued without the practical certainty of gross and palpable violations of the law of nations, particularly if submarine craft were to be employed as its instruments, inasmuch as the rules prescribed by that law, rules founded upon principles of humanity and established for the protection of the lives of non-combatants at sea, could not be to the nature of the case be observed by such vessels.

Law of Nations Violated.

It based its protest on the ground that persons of neutral nationality and vessels of neutral ownership would be exposed to extreme and intolerable risks, and that no right to close any part of the high seas against their use or to expose them to such risks could lawfully be asserted by any belligerent government.

The law of nations in these matters, upon which the government of the United States based its protest, is not of recent origin or founded upon merely arbitrary principles set up by convention. It is based, on the contrary, upon manifest and imperative principles of humanity and has long been established with the approval and by the express assent of all civilized nations.

Neutral Rights Ignored.

Notwithstanding the earnest protest of our government, the Imperial German Government at once proceeded to carry out the policy it had announced. It expressed the hope that the dangers involved, at any rate the dangers to neutral vessels, would be reduced to a minimum by the instructions which it had issued to its submarine commanders, and assured the government of the United States that it would take every possible precaution both to respect the rights of neutrals and to safeguard the lives of non-combatants.

What has actually happened in the year which has since elapsed has shown that those hopes were not justified, those assurances insupportable of being fulfilled.

Ruthless Attacks Increase.

In pursuance of the policy of submarine warfare against the commerce of its adversaries, thus announced and entered upon by the Imperial German Government despite the solemn protest of this government, the commanders of German undersea vessels have attacked merchant ships with greater and greater activity, not only upon the high seas surrounding Great Britain and Ireland but wherever they could encounter them, in a way that has grown more and more ruthless, more and more indiscriminate as the months have gone by, less and less observant of restraints of any kind; and have delivered their attacks without compunction against vessels of every nationality and bound upon every sort of errand.

Attacks Without Warning.

Vessels of neutral ownership, even vessels of neutral ownership bound from neutral port to neutral port, have been destroyed along with vessels of belligerent ownership in constantly

increasing numbers. Sometimes the merchantman attacked has been warned and summoned to surrender before being fired on or torpedoed; sometimes passengers or crews have been vouchsafed the poor security of being allowed to take to the ship's boats before she was sent to the bottom. But again and again no warning has been given, no escape even to the ship's boats allowed to those on board.

Tragedies Foreseen.

What this government foresaw must happen has happened. Tragedy has followed tragedy on the seas in such fashion, with such attendant circumstances, as to make it grossly evident that warfare of such a sort, if warfare it be, cannot be carried on without the most palpable violation of the dictates alike of right and of humanity. Whatever the disposition and intention of the Imperial German Government, it has manifestly proved impossible for it to keep such methods of attack upon the commerce of its enemies within the bounds set by either the reason or the heart of mankind.

Latest Policy Is Wanton.

In February of the present year the Imperial German Government informed this government and the other neutral governments of the world that it had reason to believe that the government of Great Britain had armed all merchant vessels of British ownership and had given them secret orders to attack any submarine of the enemy they might encounter upon the seas, and that the Imperial German Government felt justified in the circumstances in treating all armed merchantmen of belligerent ownership as auxiliary vessels of war, which it would have the right to destroy without warning. The law of nations has long recognized the right of merchantmen to carry arms for protection and to use them to repel attack, though to use them in such circumstances, at their own risk; but the Imperial German Government claimed the right to set these understandings aside in circumstances which it deemed extraordinary. Even the terms in which it announced its purpose thus still further to relax the restraints it had previously professed its willingness and desire to put upon the operations of its submarines carried the plain implication that at least vessels which were not armed would still be exempt from destruction without warning and that personal safety would be accorded their passengers and crews; but even that limitation, if it was ever practicable to observe it, has, in fact, constituted no check at all upon the destruction of ships of every sort.

Recalls Lusitania Horror.

Again and again the Imperial German Government has given this government its solemn assurances that at least passenger ships would not be thus dealt with, and yet it has again and again permitted its undersea commanders to disregard those assurances with entire impunity.

Growing Roll of American Dead.

Great liners, like the Lusitania and the Arabic, and mere ferryboats like the Sussex, have been attacked without a moment's warning, sometimes before they had even become aware that they were in the presence of an armed vessel of the enemy, and the lives of non-combatants, passengers and crew, have been sacrificed wholesale, in a manner which the government of the United States cannot but regard as wanton and without the slightest color of justification.

Only One Interpretation.

It has, of course, accepted the successive explanations and assurances of the Imperial German Government as given in entire sincerity and good faith, and has hoped, even against hope, that it would prove to be possible for the German government so to order and control the acts of its naval commanders as to square its policy with the principles of humanity as embodied in the law of nations. It has been willing to wait until the significance of the facts became absolutely unmistakable and susceptible of but one interpretation.

That point has now unhappily been reached. The facts are susceptible of but one interpretation. The Imperial German Government has been unable to put any limits or restraints upon its warfare against either freight or passenger ships.

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TELLING POINTS IN PRESIDENT'S DRAMATIC SPEECH TO CONGRESS

Washington, April 19.—Following are pertinent points in President Wilson's speech to Congress, which followed almost word for word the language of his note to Germany:

Commanders of German undersea vessels have attacked merchant ships with greater and greater activity, not only upon the high seas surrounding Great Britain and Ireland but wherever they could encounter them, in a way that has grown more and more ruthless, more and more indiscriminate as the months have gone by, less and less observant of restraints of any kind; and have delivered their attacks without compunction against vessels of every nationality and bound upon every sort of errand.

Tragedy has followed tragedy on the seas in such fashion, with such attendant circumstances, as to make it grossly evident that warfare of such a sort, if warfare it be, cannot be carried on without the most palpable violation of the dictates alike of right and of humanity.

No limit of any kind has, in fact, been set to the indiscriminate pursuit and destruction of merchantmen of all kinds and nationalities within the waters, constantly extending in area, where these operations have been carried on, and the roll of Americans who have lost their lives on ships thus attacked and destroyed has grown month by month until the ominous toll has mounted into the hundreds.

The government of the United States is at last forced to the conclusion that there is but one course it can pursue and that unless the Imperial German Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of warfare against passenger and freight carrying vessels this government can have no choice but to sever diplomatic relations with the Government of the German Empire altogether.

was that of the destruction of the French cross-channel steamer Sussex. It must stand forth, as the sinking of the steamer Lusitania did, as so singularly tragical and unjustifiable as to constitute a truly terrible example of the inhumanity of submarine warfare as the commanders of German vessels have for the past twelve months been conducting it.

German Faith in Question.

If this instance stood alone, some explanation, some disavowal by the German government, some evidence of criminal mistake or wilful disobedience on the part of the commander of the vessel that fired the torpedo, might be sought or entertained; but, unhappily, it does not stand alone. Recent events make the conclusion inevitable that it is only one instance, even though it be one of the most extreme and distressing instances, of the spirit and method of warfare which the Imperial German Government has mistakenly adopted, and which from the first exposed that government to the reproach of thrusting all neutral rights aside in pursuit of its immediate objects.

The government of the United States has been very patient. At every stage of this distressing experience of tragedy after tragedy in which its own citizens were involved, it has sought to be restrained from any extreme course of action or of protest by a thoughtful consideration of the extraordinary circumstances of this unprecedented war, and actuated in all that it said or did by the sentiments of genuine friendship which the people of the United States have always entertained and continue to entertain toward the German nation.

Only One Interpretation.

It has, of course, accepted the successive explanations and assurances of the Imperial German Government as given in entire sincerity and good faith, and has hoped, even against hope, that it would prove to be possible for the German government so to order and control the acts of its naval commanders as to square its policy with the principles of humanity as embodied in the law of nations. It has been willing to wait until the significance of the facts became absolutely unmistakable and susceptible of but one interpretation.

That point has now unhappily been reached. The facts are susceptible of but one interpretation. The Imperial German Government has been unable to put any limits or restraints upon its warfare against either freight or passenger ships.

Insists U-Boat War Cease.

It has, therefore, become painfully evident that the position which this government took at the very outset is inevitable—namely, that the use of submarines for the destruction of an enemy's commerce is of necessity, because of the very character of the vessels employed and the very methods of attack which their employment of course involves, incompatible with the principles of humanity, the long established and incontrovertible rights of

"STAND BEHIND THE PRESIDENT"

"Even at This Late Hour
It's Fitting to Demand
Redress," Says Gotham.

"Stand behind the President."

This is the keynote of comments on President Wilson's note to Germany made last night by well known New Yorkers. Professor Ellery C. Stowell, head of the department of international law at Columbia, summarized what may be regarded as public opinion somewhat more fully, when he declared:

"Even now, it is fitting that we should at this late hour insist upon redress, and we should break with Germany if she does not make it. A rupture of relations is better than dishonoring negotiations. War is preferable to disloyal neutrality."

Continuing, Professor Stowell said: "The German government threatened, after February 18, 1915, to sink passenger liners within a specified zone. President Wilson replied with his strict accountability note."

Warning Ignored by Germany.

"Germany notwithstanding perpetrated her retaliation upon the United States by the brutal sinking of the Lusitania. Any self-respecting government would not have declared war on Germany, or at least have broken off all friendly intercourse."

"If we had done so, every American, hyphenated or not, would have stood back of our President. Instead, we entered into a drawn out negotiation without apparent plan, as it was without effect or without honor, until no one could understand where we stood."

"I know of no instance in history where a great power has submitted to such an injury, aggravated as it was by the deliberate disregard of our warning."

"It is sad to feel in this supreme moment that we cannot lay claim to the heroic past which befits the sons of our fathers."

Frederic R. Condit, authority on international law, said:

"In the early days of the republic diplomatic relations were upon two occasions suspended with France. At later times diplomatic relations have been suspended between Brazil and the United States, as well as between Mexico and the United States. In none of these cases did war follow."

"When diplomatic relations are severed a nation must face the strong probability of war. National feelings are strongly aroused, animosity is engendered, the usual conduits of international intercourse cease to function, and thus there is great probability of armed conflict."

"Here suspension of diplomatic intercourse does not suspend the functions of consuls or commercial relations, which, in theory at least, might continue as heretofore. The effect is primarily moral. In this particular case the effect would be world-wide. The only great nation remaining neutral would have declared Germany an outlaw nation, and she would find herself and her Austrian and Turkish allies standing utterly condemned at the bar of civilization and world opinion. Certainly there has never been such an international arraignment since then world began, and personally I believe that our attitude will result in materially shortening the war. Assuming, as appears probable, that Germany will not cease her submarine warfare, she will find herself in a world completely hostile."

"The smaller countries now hesitant, but whose action may be of the utmost importance—Rumania, Greece, Holland—will undoubtedly be influenced by the attitude of the United States to declare themselves. It will appear evident to them that Germany and her two allies cannot confront the world in arms."

"Again, the better sentiment among the German people will then realize that the course of her military autocracy from the day of the invasion of Belgium has placed Prussian militarism in conflict with modern civilization, and this presence of home opinion, added to the exterior pressure of practically the whole world, should lead to a speedy peace."

Henry Bruere, City Chamberlain:

"The President's message to Congress is in the nature of a warning to the country that we are on the verge of a great national crisis. At such a time it is imperative that no patriotic citizen do or say anything to increase the difficulty of averting a breach of relations between this country and Germany."

Relies on Wilson and Congress.

"No one wants the situation to develop into hostilities or an approach to hostilities. The more we feel that the President is justified, the more we are obligated to rely on the sanity and restraint which the President and Congress undoubtedly exercise at this time."

"Without the complete information which the President possesses, and which he will undoubtedly make public at the proper time, I regard it the duty of every good American to keep his mind clear of rash conclusions, so that he may be able to think in terms of the highest welfare of the nation when the time comes, if it does come, for him to reach a final judgment."

"Whatever decision is finally reached it must be the nation's decision and must be based on all the facts."

Oscar S. Straus, chairman of the Public Service Commission:

"The position taken by Mr. Wilson in his note to Germany is certainly justified by the principles of international law, and the obligations of a great neutral nation to protect its citizens on the high seas in times of war."

Wilson Justified, Says Straus.

"It is to be earnestly hoped that the German government will fully and deeply appreciate the seriousness of the situation, which now confronts both that country and this one."

Chauncey M. Deneu, former United States Senator from New York:

"President Wilson, with his usual professional command of English, has put the existing submarine question very well in his note to Germany. I believe that he was right in laying the entire matter before the Congress of the United States."

"I am in the strongest accord with Mr. Wilson's position in this issue."

But I believe he should have many months ago taken the step he took today. The whole situation is one of the most grave that has confronted this country in many years."

Bishop David H. Greer:

"President Wilson's note to Germany is a document which may affect the destinies of nations. One cannot express an accurate opinion of it until one has gravely studied every word of it."

Mayor John Purroy Mitchell:

"Patriotic Americans at the time of a dangerous crisis now threatened between this country and Germany should stand solidly behind their President. They should leave talking on delicate international questions to the properly constituted officials."

CONGRESS IS BEHIND PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Continued from page 1

ships. His horror at what he regarded as the strong stand taken by the President in the German situation last February played an important part in creating the wave of fear which engulfed Congress on Washington's Birthday.

Comments of Members.

Some of the more interesting comments by members of the two houses following the President's address were:

Senator Kenyon of Iowa—If war comes out of this, I very much hope the first to enlist will be those who have insisted on riding on the armed vessels of belligerent nations.

Senator Jones, of Washington—I don't believe Americans should travel on belligerent vessels. If they do, I hope the travelers will be the first to enlist in the war, should it come. The American people will never approve a war on the grounds named.

Senator Cummins of Iowa—The President's speech, evidently points to a very grave situation. That is all I care to say.

Wilson Driven to Action.

Senator Phelan, of California, Democrat—The President has been driven to this stand; it has not been voluntarily assumed. The world and the country must recognize that there is such a thing as neutral rights.

Senator Stone, of Missouri—This is a good time for everybody to remain

quiet and keep control of his balance wheel.

Senator Lewis, of Illinois—I assume that when the President asks the Senate to adopt whatever remedy he may suggest he will send to the Senate the facts upon which he has reached his conclusion. Until then nothing will be done.

Gallinger Against War.

Senator Gallinger, of New Hampshire, Republican leader—I don't know what the President means exactly. He has made a declaration and he has asked Congress to hear it, but he hasn't asked Congress to act. I don't think we ought to go to war on that message.

Senator Sutherland, of Utah, Republican—I do not see how any conclusion other than that to which the President has come is possible if honor and dignity are to be preserved. At the same time I wish the President had laid his principal emphasis on the violations of American rights, with which we are immediately concerned, than to have indulged in comment upon the rights of humanity in general.

Representative Flood, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee—I do not think the President could have been any more moderate or conservative under the circumstances connected with the controversy than he was in his message. I think his course is bound to be approved by the country and by Congress.

Representative Mann, minority leader—In the first place, I don't see any reason for the President to have come to Congress to read this message. It could have been just as well to have given his statement to the papers, in which we could have read it. When the McLemore resolution was up in the House I said that the President wanted to involve us in war with Germany. His attitude has not been neutral in any respect. I thought this country should be neutral. His message to-day shows he expects, if he can, to force war with Germany. We have some complaints against Germany, though the President exaggerated them this morning. We have some complaints against Germany, though the President exaggerated them this morning.

Former Speaker Cannon—I got the impression from what I imperfectly heard that no action will be taken until there are further diplomatic parleys between the Executive and Germany.

The communication will be presented to the American government by the French and British Ambassadors jointly. It consists of two parts, a long note and a supplement signed by the French and British ambassadors, rival at Washington, certain cable changes have been made in the original note.

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Really, as a matter of my own individual judgment, I am more concerned about the Mexican situation.

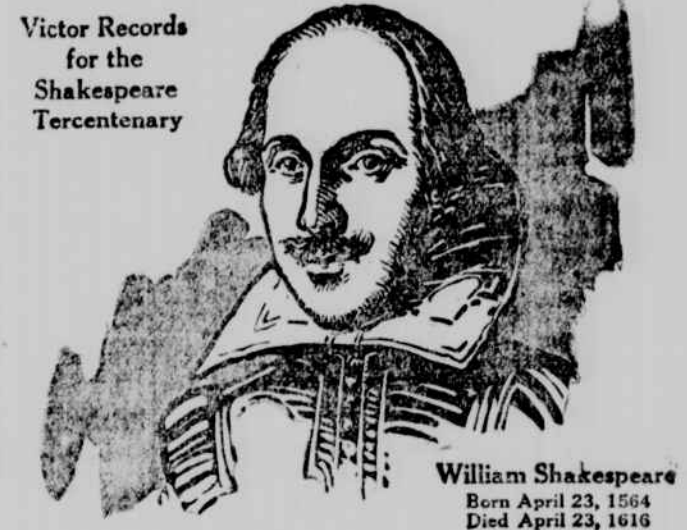
ALLIES SEND ANSWER TO BLOCKADE PROTEST

Franco-British Note on Way to Government.

London, April 19.—The reply of Great Britain and France to the American note of protest against interference with maritime commerce by the Entente Allies has been cabled to Washington.

The communication will be presented to the American government by the French and British Ambassadors jointly. It consists of two parts, a long note and a supplement signed by the French and British ambassadors, rival at Washington, certain cable changes have been made in the original note.

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International Sea Police

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Holland asks the question through S. Van Houten, Dutch publicist and statesman, in next Sunday's Tribune. This article by an authority on European politics is only one of the many noteworthy features in the paper which your newsdealer will deliver to you, if you tell him you want it.

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